

~~Top Secret~~

**Interagency  
Intelligence  
Memorandum**

**CIA HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM  
RELEASE AS SANITIZED**

~~DCI~~

1999

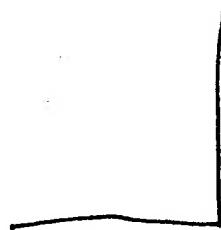
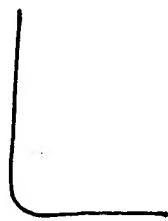
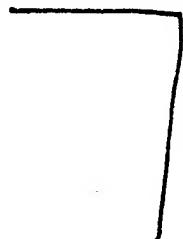
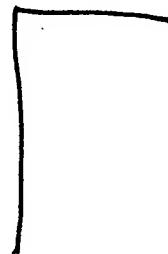
*The Significance of Soviet TU-95 Bear D  
Deployments in West Africa*

~~Top Secret~~

NI IIM 77-010C

April 1977

Copy No 110



## THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SOVIET TU-95 BEAR D DEPLOYMENTS IN WEST AFRICA<sup>1</sup>

### KEY JUDGMENTS

- Deployment of Soviet naval TU-95 Bear D long-range reconnaissance aircraft to Conakry and the staging of operational flights from there is in keeping with the pattern of evolving Soviet out-of-area naval operations.
- Bear D deployments to Conakry begun in 1973 are one element of a Soviet effort to expand the area of its maritime surveillance which includes deployments to Cuba, Somalia, and, very recently to Angola. Operating from all four of these countries, as well as from Soviet bases on the Kola Peninsula, Bear Ds can conduct operations over virtually any area of the Atlantic and Indian Oceans.
- In general, Bear D operational missions add little to the Soviet strategic threat to the continental US. However, Bear Ds staging from Conakry, Cuba, and Soviet bases in the Kola Peninsula, contribute to the threat to Western naval forces operating in the northern Atlantic Ocean, including the western approaches to the Mediterranean.
- The use of airfields in Guinea and Angola has extended the Soviets' area of air reconnaissance into parts of the South Atlantic which they could not reach from Cuba or the USSR.
- In peacetime Bear Ds operating from Conakry can perform ocean surveillance, collect intelligence, fly search and rescue missions, and provide support to the Soviet manned space flight program.

<sup>1</sup> This Interagency Intelligence Memorandum was produced by the National Intelligence Officer for Conventional Forces with contributions and concurrence from CIA, State/INR, and DIA.

The ocean surveillance mission is part of a worldwide Soviet effort to monitor Western naval surface forces to provide reasonably accurate knowledge of the dispositions of these forces at the inception of a crisis or hostilities.

- In peacetime much of the reconnaissance effort and intelligence collection in the eastern Atlantic now performed by Bear Ds from Conakry could be accomplished by missions staged from the Kola Peninsula or Cuba. However, flight time to these surveillance areas would be increased and on-station time over the objective would be reduced.
- The wartime roles of the Bear Ds include tactical reconnaissance in support of Soviet naval operations, direct targeting of US/NATO naval forces—particularly aircraft carriers

- Bear Ds constitute an extremely important component of the Soviet ocean surveillance system for locating and targeting surface forces at sea.
- The other components, singly or in combination, do not provide a comparable alternative to Bear D, but enhance the effectiveness of Bear D operations.

- If the Soviets should lose access to Guinea, they would probably seek to reestablish their capability in another African country. Most of the countries are poor and some might be tempted to allow Soviet use of facilities in return for aid. However, a variety of factors—political, logistic, technical, and geographic—would hamper or thwart a Soviet effort to reestablish a Bear D reconnaissance capability in West Africa.

## DISCUSSION

### I. BACKGROUND

1. Deployment of Soviet naval Bear D long-range reconnaissance aircraft to West African airfields is in keeping with the pattern of evolving Soviet out-of-area naval operations. Soviet naval reconnaissance aircraft and to a lesser extent antisubmarine warfare aircraft have participated in deployments to foreign airfields since 1968, but these deployments have been increasing in frequency, duration, and numbers of countries visited since the early 1970s.

2. Bear D deployments to Guinea, begun in 1973, are but one element of a Soviet effort to expand the area of its maritime surveillance. Similar operations began in Cuba in 1970, in Somalia in 1976, and in Angola in January 1977.<sup>2</sup> Operating from all four of these countries, as well as from Soviet bases in the Kola Peninsula, Bear Ds can conduct operations over virtually any area of the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. From these airfields Soviet Naval Aviation (SNA) aircraft contribute to Soviet military capabilities through enhanced ocean surveillance, improved capabilities to respond to international crises and operational contingencies, and increased opportunities for intelligence collection.

3. Since 1973, 18 separate deployments by pairs of Bear Ds have been made to Conakry. These flights primarily have been conducted to provide the Soviet ocean surveillance system with a capability for monitoring Western naval operations and carrier transit lanes in the Atlantic. The aircraft remain in Conakry an average of 17 days—the longest period was 42 days and the shortest was 6 days. At least 37 reconnaissance missions have been flown during these deployments. Nine missions have involved known reconnaissance activities of varying intensity against US Navy or NATO ships; four or five may have been correlated with support of deployed Soviet naval units; and six or seven have represented aircraft participation in major Soviet fleet exercises, including

<sup>2</sup> A Soviet Naval Aviation unit which included shorter range TU-16 reconnaissance aircraft was continuously maintained in Egypt from 1968 to 1972.

five during the Soviet worldwide naval exercise OKEAN 75. Many of the other flights, whose purposes are not known, may have been search missions against US or NATO ships or to areas where such ships might be expected to operate. Bear D aircraft have operated from Conakry during two periods of tension, the Middle East war in October 1973 and the Angolan civil war in 1975-76.

4. During the most recent deployment, pairs of Bear Ds flew six reconnaissance missions; three were against US Navy and other NATO forces conducting an exercise in the western approaches to the Mediterranean Sea. Identification of the units involved and some assessment of the scope and character of the exercise were probably intelligence objectives of these flights. Such operations offer the Soviets an opportunity to gain realistic experience and to increase SNA's readiness to accomplish its wartime roles.

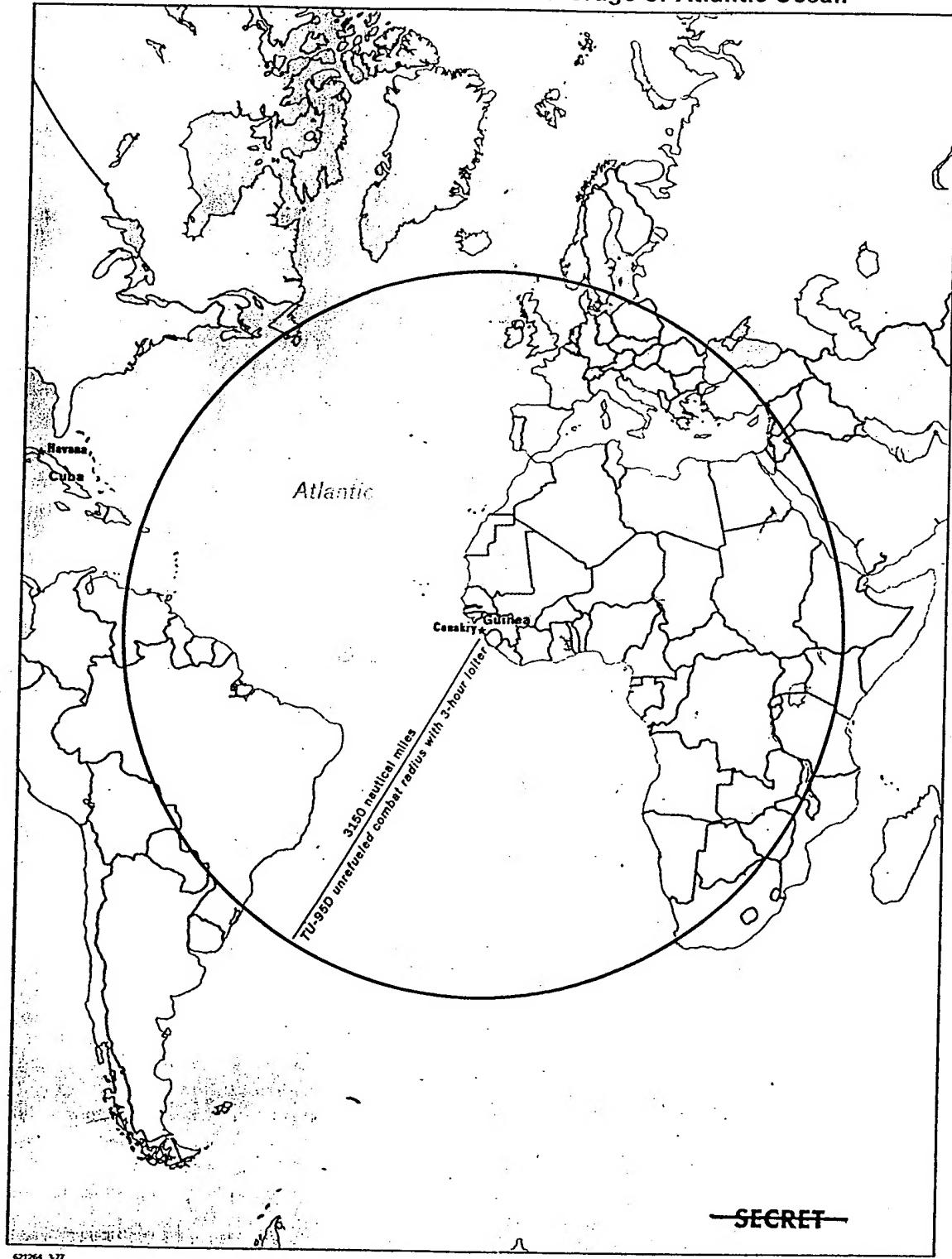
### II. CAPABILITIES AND USES OF BEAR D

#### Peacetime Uses

5. The Bear D represents an efficient combination of performance capabilities (large search area, long endurance, and rapid reaction), available sensors (radar, electronic intercept equipment, cameras, and the significant human element), and operational flexibility which is unique among Soviet reconnaissance platforms. The Bear D is a highly adaptable multimission aircraft configured to perform peacetime missions of ocean surveillance, intelligence collection, aid in search and rescue, and support to the Soviet manned space flight program.

6. Reconnaissance against Western naval forces offers opportunities for visual, photographic, and electronic intelligence (ELINT) collection from which data regarding ship configurations, associated aircraft, weapons, and electronic equipments may be developed.

Potential Scope of TU-95D Surveillance Coverage of Atlantic Ocean



### Wartime Role

7. The wartime roles attributed to the aircraft include tactical reconnaissance in support of Soviet naval surface ships, submarines, and aircraft strike forces, and direct targeting of US/NATO naval forces—particularly aircraft carriers

13. Ships, whether they are intelligence collectors, combatants, or even merchant ships, do compete with the aircraft identification capabilities but lack the speed, responsiveness, or search area capabilities of the Bear D.

### IV. TECHNOLOGICAL COUNTERMEASURES AGAINST BEAR D

8. Bear Ds are part of the Soviet Navy's general purpose forces

### III. OTHER SOVIET METHODS FOR OCEAN SURVEILLANCE

9. The Soviet Ocean Surveillance System is composed of several complementary components of which the Bear D is but one. Used in conjunction with other elements of the Soviet Ocean Surveillance System, Bear D can provide key locating and targeting data on surface units at sea. The other system components do not provide an alternative to the contributions of the Bear D.

10. The Soviet High Frequency Direction Finding (HFDF) network provides a major portion of surface reconnaissance data during peacetime when ships are freely emitting their radio signals.

11. Radar Ocean Reconnaissance Satellites (RORSATs), while able to search large areas, lack the flexibility, responsiveness, on-station time, and target identification abilities of the manned aircraft.

### V. VALUE TO THE SOVIETS OF BEAR D- FLIGHTS FROM CONAKRY

15. While Bear D staging from Conakry adds little to the Soviets' strategic threat to the continental US, these aircraft, along with Bear Ds staging from Cuba and the Kola Peninsula, contribute to the threat to Western naval forces operating in the northern Atlantic Ocean including the western approaches to the Mediterranean Sea. As indicated above, Bear Ds are an extremely important element in Soviet ocean surveillance. During peacetime, the general disposition of Western naval surface forces is monitored for contingency purposes so that the Soviets would have reasonably accurate knowledge of the positions of Western surface forces at the inception of a crisis or hostilities. In a wartime situation this knowledge would facilitate subsequent targeting of Western forces.

16. The use of West African airfields has extended the Soviets' area of airborne reconnaissance into parts of the South Atlantic Ocean which they could not reach from Cuba or the USSR.

17. During the period of heightened tension prior to and during the Arab-Israeli War of October 1973, Bear Ds were deployed to Conakry continuously [redacted]

[redacted] and conducted at least three missions against US naval forces operating in the eastern Atlantic area. The Soviets were obviously employing these forward staged reconnaissance assets to ascertain the extent of US naval reaction to the crisis and specifically to identify the forces involved.

18. In peacetime much of the intelligence collection and reconnaissance effort in the eastern Atlantic now performed by Bear Ds from Conakry could be accomplished by missions staged from the Kola Peninsula. However, flight time to the surveillance area would be greatly increased and on-station time over the objective would be significantly reduced.

19. In a reconnaissance flight, on-station time is traded off with the distance of the search area from the airfield of origin. For every hour of on-station time, transit time must be reduced by roughly the same amount. Thus, aircraft from the Kola Peninsula can reach the area west of Gibraltar and other mid-Atlantic areas but because of the distances involved they have only a brief on-station time. Aircraft from Guinea on the other hand, can reach these same areas much more quickly and conduct search or intelligence collection for an extended time period.

20. If Conakry were not available to Bear D deployments, the Soviets would have to modify their reconnaissance effort over the northern Atlantic by relying more heavily on flights from the Kola Peninsula or Cuba. Because of the distance involved, Conakry is also attractive as a refueling stop for Bear Ds deploying to Luanda; the Bears which deployed to Luanda in January refueled there. The landing rights available to SNA in Guinea and the recently acquired access to Luanda also offer the Soviets an alternative though lengthy air route to bases in Somalia, should Iran elect to deny them overflight rights for their usual route.

21. In addition to their military value, Bear D deployments to Conakry and elsewhere in Africa contribute to Soviet political objectives in Africa. In President Sekou Toure's view, the Bear Ds are part of a Soviet naval presence which protects Guinea against

perceived threats from unfriendly neighboring countries and "imperialists." The periodic presence of Bear Ds in Conakry is probably not widely known in Africa. But, in general, evidence of Soviet military presence is unsettling to moderate African states which are already fearful of the consequences of the Soviet and Cuban presence in Angola. Such fears have caused some of these states to be increasingly concerned with local defense arrangements and with possible threats to their security encouraged by the USSR and Cuba.

## VI. ALTERNATE DEPLOYMENT SITES

22. If the Soviets should lose access to Guinea, they would probably seek to reestablish their capability in another West African country. No country in the region would automatically acquiesce in such a move. A number of them, however, are badly in need of economic assistance and might be tempted to allow Soviet use of facilities in return for aid. However, there are other factors that would hamper or thwart a Soviet effort to relocate.

### Logistic and Operational Considerations

23. Logistic considerations suggest Moscow would prefer an airfield close to port facilities where Soviet ships could call to provide fuel, supplies, and communication support.

24. Runway length would presumably be a very important factor. Runway requirements vary widely with the load carried by the aircraft, weather conditions, and the presence of obstacles at the end of the runway. For instance, a Bear could make an emergency landing on a runway as short as 1,200 meters. Under ideal conditions it could take off fully loaded in 1,700 meters. Conditions rarely are ideal, however, and the Soviets have usually sought and obtained runways at least 3,000 meters long for regular peacetime operations. During war or crisis, they would probably use shorter runways if necessary.

25. Judging from past Bear D operations, we believe the support requirements for Bear D aircraft on a deployment of two to three weeks are modest. Most 3,000-meter runway airfields with reasonably complete support facilities for aircraft in general can accommodate TU-95 operations with only minimal supplementary personnel and material needed. The pattern has been for two AN-12 medium transports, or in the case of Cuba, a single TU-114, to precede each pair of Bear Ds to their overseas deployment sites.

These aircraft bring the extra personnel, ground support equipment and spare parts necessary for the typical out-of-area deployment of Bear Ds. The use of TU-114s for Cuban deployments is dictated by the long distance over water rather than differing support requirements.

#### Cape Verde

26. The Soviets probably would find the Sal International Airport in Cape Verde the most attractive among alternative existing facilities that could adequately support Bear D operations. Despite the adequacy of Sal, for political reasons it is highly unlikely that the Cape Verde government would agree to the necessary support and other arrangements.

27. At present, civilian aircraft of all nations may use Sal, but military aircraft are permitted to use it on an ad hoc basis only. The Soviets could offer badly needed economic aid as a quid pro quo. So long as aid is available from other single-nation and international sources, Cape Verde would be unlikely to accept a Soviet bid.

28. While closely linked to the radical Guinea-Bissau by a common governing political party, the basically moderate Cape Verde government is seeking to maintain its nonaligned posture in foreign relations. It has good relations with the US, which is its third most important source of economic assistance (after the Netherlands and Portugal). Cape Verde has close ties with the US because of the large Cape Verdean community residing in the US.

#### Guinea-Bissau

29. The 2,400-meter runway of Bissau airfield is too short for routine Bear D requirements. Effective use of the field would require lengthening the runway and upgrading the facilities. While the Soviets may have done some resurfacing of the runway, it has not been lengthened. As an alternative, the Soviets might build a new airport for the Guinea-Bissau government, but there is no evidence of any such construction.

30. Despite important current Soviet economic and military assistance and its more radical stance in foreign relations, Guinea-Bissau like Cape Verde also desires to keep free of great power rivalries and is not likely to be receptive to any future Soviet request for staging facilities for Bear Ds in return for increased aid.

#### Mali

31. A Soviet offer of significantly increased military or economic assistance to debt-ridden Mali, in return for Bear D staging rights, would probably be tempting. However, Mali does not share Guinea's acute suspicion of its neighbors, probably feels no need for a protective Soviet military presence. The government would think twice about how such an agreement with the Soviets would impact on the US, a major aid donor to Mali.

32. In any event, the Soviets are upgrading airfields in Mali. The runway of the old Bamako airport is currently being lengthened from 2,100 to 3,000 meters. A possible objective is to provide improved facilities for Soviet transport aircraft in case of future airlifts to southern Africa. Malian as well as Guinean airfields were used during the Soviet airlift to Angola.

33. Mali is an unlikely choice for a staging area for Bear Ds, however, for several reasons. Its landlocked location could raise potentially serious problems of overflight rights needed to permit regular Bear D operations. Similarly, the lack of open sea access would complicate logistic support, particularly in time of crisis.

#### Other Possibilities to the South

34. A number of countries farther south might be receptive to the staging of Bear D flights. However, their location far from the aircraft's usual operating area in the northern Atlantic would make them a poor alternative to Conakry.

35. *Benin.* From the political point of view a promising candidate would be Benin, a self-proclaimed "Marxist-Leninist" state in desperate economic straits. Benin is particularly suspicious of the West and is insecure since the mercenary raid on Cotonou in mid-January. Despite its professed ideology, Benin has not been particularly close to the Soviet Union, preferring instead the North Korean model of socialist development. Also, the Soviets are probably wary of the inherent instability of Beninese institutions that has resulted in numerous changes of government since the country's independence. Nevertheless, a Soviet commitment to extend considerable economic and defense assistance to Benin might win it air and naval rights in return. In this regard, a Soviet amphibious ship has recently conducted the first naval visit to Benin. However, Cotonou airfield with its 2,500-meter runway is inadequate for routine

staging of Bear Ds. Extension of the runway would be difficult because of the field's closeness to the city and the sea.

36. *Equatorial Guinea*. Air facilities in Equatorial Guinea, both on the mainland near Bata and on Francisco Macie island (Fernando Po) are currently inadequate for Bear Ds. Runways are under 2,240 meters, and no new construction has been detected. Although Equatorial Guinea is poor and gets considerable aid from Communist countries, its erratic president has been so suspicious of the Soviets that he would be unlikely to grant staging rights for Bear Ds. Even if he did, he might withdraw permission for the most capricious of reasons.

37. *Angola*. The USSR and Angola signed a friendship treaty in October 1976. Although Bear Ds deployed for the first time to Luanda this winter, we

do not know if the Soviet-Angolan treaty provides for their regular staging there. Nevertheless, under present circumstances, the Angolan government would be unlikely to refuse a Soviet request to use Luanda for regular Bear D staging—despite the new government's concern to maintain an image of nonalignment. The fact remains, however, that Angola, located about 3,000 kilometers farther than Conakry from the usual northern Atlantic Bear D operating areas, is a poor substitute for an airfield in Guinea.

#### Algeria

38. Technically, Algerian airfields would provide a feasible alternative to Conakry. Although the Soviets have good relations with Algeria and have landing rights there for the AN-12s which support Bear D deployment to Africa, it is unlikely that Algeria would grant staging rights for Bear Ds.

~~Top Secret~~



~~Top Secret~~